		Sanctioned strength	Vacancies
Group 'A'	& 'B'	83	03
Group 'C'		9490 7900	1105
Group 'D'			102

(c) Filing up of vacancies is a continuous process. As per standing instructions, the vacancies in essential categories are required to be filled up promptly. Action has accordingly been initiated by the Railway to place indents on Railway Recruitment Board for recruitment against direct recruitment quota vacancies in Group 'C, to conduct selections/suitability tests/trade tests to fill up the remaining Group *'C'* vacancies by promotion and to finalise pending cases of compassionate appointments and regularisation of substitutes against Group 'D' posts.

(d) The steps taken to streamline the recruitment procedure in the recent past include revamping of Railway Recruitment Boards, discontinuing the earlier practice of associating non-official members belonging to SC/ST, minority and OBC communities in the Interview Committees constituted for recruitment to Group 'C' and 'D' posts on the Railways and instead providing for association in these Committees of serving Railway Officers of appropriate rank blonging to these communities; procedure for publicity of employment notices in the Employment News in addition to such Notices being issued to the Employment Exchanges, recognised associations of Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes, etc. The steps taken by the Railway include processing of applications by use of computers; conducting of objective type written tests by use of one plus one carbonles answer sheet system and physical fitness tests for Group 'D'.

Development projects of Railways

601. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number and details of development projects initiated by Railways during 1998-99;

(b) the number of rolling stocks, passenger creches, etc. added during 1998-99, Zone-wise;

(c) the details of new passenger amenities created during the same period; and

(d) if answers to (a) to (c) above be in the negative, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Touts at New Delhi Railway Station

602. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item published in the Pioneer dated 28th January, 1999, under the heading "Touts cash in on Railways computer trip";

(b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken in this regard;

(c) whether Government are aware that a large number of touts function at New Delhi Railway Station almost daily and fleece the prospective travellers; and

(d) if so, how many persons have been booked during the last six months?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE

MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The computerised reservation system at New Delhi failed at 1520 hrs. on 21.1.1999 preceded by some problems of charts preparation resulting in blank printing. The system was set right at about 2130 hrs. on the same day. The fault has been attributed to the continuous heavy utilisation of the system resources for handling the total work load which has increased due to the increase in the number of locations windows, trains etc. Efforts are underway tc provide adequate back-up.

(c) Some instances of anti-social elements indulging in such activities have come to notice.

(d) 461 touts have been detected and booked during the last six months (August 1998 to January '1999).

Delay in Nizamuddin-Vishakhapatnam Link Express

603. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the specific causes for regular, daily delays in the Nizamuddin-Visakhapatnam link express;

(b) whether it is a fact that this train reaches Rajahmundry late by three hours on an average every day;

(c) whether frequent demands have been made to reduce the travelling time of this train, linking Delhi and Andhra Pradesh; and

(d) if so, what are the reasons for ignoring the demand to upgrade the Nizamuddin-Visakhapatnam link express?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) Punctuality of trains including Nizamuddin-Visakhapatnam link Express was affected during this winter mainly due to fog in Northern and Central India.

(c) and (d) Speeding up of Nizamuddin-Visakhapatnam link Express has been examined but not found operationally feasible.

Degradation of Guwahati Bound Rajdhani Express

604. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what are the reasons for degrading the Guwahati bound Rajdhani Express to the rank of ordinary express by allowing so many stoppages, unheard of in respect of superfast categories of trains like Rajdhani; and

(b) what is the plan of the Ministry to improve the speed of trains running between North-East and Delhi and South via Calcutta?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Rajdhani Express has not been downgraded to the rank of ordinary Express trains.

(b) Speeds of trains are dependent upon track structure, signalling and the type of traction apart from the number of stoppages provided. Improvement of speeds is an ongoing process on Indian Railways through gradual dupgradation of technology.